

Senza Sordino

Official Publication of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians

VOLUME 49 NO. 2

Online Edition

June 2011

Detroit in the Crosshairs

by Haden McKay, Detroit Symphony Orchestra

On April 9, 2011 the musicians of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra returned to the stage of Orchestra Hall for the first of two triumphant concerts. Just one day earlier, a vote to ratify the DSO's new four-year contract had brought an official end to one of the longest strikes in North American orchestra history. Readers of *Senza Sordino* and visitors to the website detroitsymphonymusicians.org are already well aware of the past year's events in the Motor City. The six-month work stoppage took a painful toll on the members of the orchestra and their families as well as Detroit's music lovers, and the future of the venerable institution is far from assured. At the same time, the members of the DSO hope that their struggle will have done more than just help one orchestra survive a crisis. Ideally, symphony boards and managements everywhere seeking to tame deficits will draw valuable lessons from Detroit about what *not* to do.

While blessed with an outstanding concert hall and proud musical traditions, the Detroit Symphony had historically faced financial challenges as it maintained top-ten status in the United States. When the world financial crisis hit in 2008, the DSO was already weakened by a narrowing of its donor base, declining ticket revenue and the burden of real estate debt from its 2003 hall expansion. Management asked to reopen the orchestra's contract during 2009, but discussions broke down when management refused to consider an agreement with any extension in term or even partial recovery of givebacks. The stage was set for a confrontation upon contract expiration in August 2010.

Given the magnitude of the economic downturn in Detroit, musicians knew that they would need to sacrifice to keep the DSO viable. The fundamental problem in what played out—and what turned a concessionary contract negotiation into a conflagration—was the decision of the DSO board and management to use the crisis to try to impose sweeping changes on the institution and working life of

the musicians. At various times in the negotiations the musicians were confronted with proposals to eliminate tenure, remove the librarians from the bargaining unit, hire and retain new musicians at sharply lower wages, remove orchestra representatives from board committees, freeze the orchestra's pension plan while withdrawing from the AFM-EPF plan, perform unlimited free media services, and institute an extreme version of service conversion (developed without any musician input although a comprehensive strategic plan had just been jointly written and adopted) up to and including assignment to non-musical duties for weekly scale.

Predictably, DSO members were unified in their opposition to such tactics. They saw a threat not only to their own institution and working lives, but to professional musicians everywhere. Once the strike began on October 4, 2010, the musicians attracted public attention and support from Detroit and far beyond. Most observers seemed to realize that too-drastic cuts, especially combined with harmful changes which didn't even address the money problems, would make it impossible to retain and attract the top musicians who would ensure the DSO's continued high quality. With the help of generous guest conductors and soloists, the musicians organized and performed more than twenty successful concerts in and around Detroit. Local music lovers made contributions and formed a powerful audience advocacy group, SAVE OUR SYMPHONY, which is still very active post-settlement. Overwhelming financial contributions from fellow professional musicians, largely ICSOM, OCSM and ROPA members, made a huge difference in enabling DSO members to continue their struggle. President Gordon Stump and Secretary-Treasurer Sue Barna-Ayoub of Local 5 provided unhesitating and seamless support.

Meanwhile, the bargaining process itself was at a near standstill. Despite the expertise of counsel Leonard Leibowitz and attempts to assist from community leaders and politicians such as Governor Jennifer Granholm and Senator Carl Levin, months passed without any progress. In the end, the involvement of business leaders Dan Gilbert and Matt Cullen seemed to break the deadlock, and a tentative agreement was reached on April 3. Of course, by then most of the season had been lost and millions of dollars in ticket revenue refunded to patrons. Several orchestra members had taken other positions. Trust within the institution had been badly damaged.

The new DSO contract is detailed in an ICSOM settlement bulletin. While it is deeply concessionary, the agreement does not contain any of the proposals from management's grab bag listed above. It

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Chairperson's Report

by Bruce Ridge



Ending the Doctrine of Failure

Recently WQXR in New York held a panel discussion called *American Orchestras: Endangered Species?* And, unfortunately, I'm afraid the title of the session betrayed its bias. The session began with the moderator pronouncing that "orchestras from Honolulu to New Mexico to Syracuse have shut down entirely." It is this sort of misleading language from within our own field that leads to negative journalism. Most businesses seek to avoid negative publicity, but the symphonic field seems to cultivate it. Of course, the moderator should have said (if he wanted to be accurate) that orchestras *in* Honolulu, New Mexico, *and* Syracuse have shut down. Saying essentially that orchestras from sea to shining sea (and beyond) have disappeared implies that the country is littered with dead orchestras. The assertion that orchestras in a path as straight as the crow flies are bankrupt ignores and damages the many success stories along the way. In fact, he might have wanted to mention the successful negotiation of a new collective bargaining agreement for a long hoped for re-start of the Honolulu Symphony. The number of orchestras sustaining themselves quite well depends on whether you take I-40 or I-70, but the opening statement of the moderator did its damage nonetheless.

There is no doubt that there is a conversation that needs to be held about orchestras in America, and there is no doubt that it is not being held. In June, the League of American Orchestras (*League*) held its annual convention in Minneapolis. In response to the "crisis" that has been declared, the League added a plenary panel at the last minute, which they described this way:

In response to pressing field-wide needs, some Conference content has been changed to address the issues that have led to the crises in Detroit, Louisville, Honolulu, Syracuse, New Mexico, and Philadelphia...

The warning signals have been there for years: persistent deficits, less-than-packed houses, concerned patrons and funders questioning continued support, communities in transition asking more of us than we ably deliver, and too many concerts amidst changing and shrinking demand.

Despite great sacrifices from musicians and staffs and stepped up giving from boards and volunteers, too many orchestras—not all, for sure—but far too many, are in critical condition. We can and must act—first, by speaking openly and frankly about our challenges, and next by looking deeply at how we operate.

When the League made this announcement, we felt that surely if they wanted to hold an "open and frank" conversation, then they would want to include the elected representatives of orchestra musicians. So, I contacted the League and offered to be present for the panel at

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*A Player Conference of the
American Federation of Musicians of the
United States and Canada, AFL-CIO*

www.icsom.org

Orchestras

Alabama Symphony Orchestra
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra
Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
Boston Symphony Orchestra
Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra
Charlotte Symphony Orchestra
Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra
Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra
The Cleveland Orchestra
Colorado Symphony Orchestra
Columbus Symphony Orchestra
Dallas Symphony Orchestra
Detroit Symphony Orchestra
Florida Orchestra
Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra
Grant Park Symphony Orchestra
Honolulu Symphony Orchestra
Houston Symphony Orchestra
Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra
Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra
Kansas City Symphony
Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra
Los Angeles Philharmonic
Louisville Orchestra
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
Minnesota Orchestra
Nashville Symphony Orchestra
National Symphony Orchestra
New Jersey Symphony Orchestra
New York City Ballet Orchestra
New York City Opera Orchestra
New York Philharmonic
North Carolina Symphony
Oregon Symphony Orchestra
Philadelphia Orchestra
Phoenix Symphony Orchestra
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra
Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra
Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra
Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra
San Antonio Symphony
San Diego Symphony Orchestra
San Francisco Ballet Orchestra
San Francisco Opera Orchestra
San Francisco Symphony
Syracuse Symphony Orchestra
Utah Symphony Orchestra
Virginia Symphony

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Subscriptions: \$10 per year, payable to *Senza Sordino*, c/o Michael Moore, Treasurer, 953 Rosedale Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30306. Report delivery-related problems to Richard Levine, Editor, 6304 Radio Dr., San Diego, CA 92114.

Senza Sordino, the official publication of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians, Inc., is published four to six times a year. Copyright © 2011. All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction prohibited.



Chairperson's Report

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ICSOM's expense. I was eager to participate in a positive dialogue, especially as my orchestra's concert schedule had made it impossible for me to participate in the WQXR panel.

Unfortunately, for its own reasons, the League declined to issue such an invitation to the elected leadership of ICSOM. While the request led to a cordial conversation with the League's leadership, it nonetheless also led to disappointment and a little bit of confusion, as I was informed that at this conference the League will be awarding its highest honor, the "Golden Baton," posthumously to Fred Zenone.

Of course, Fred Zenone is widely recognized among ICSOM's greatest historical leaders, and one who sought to build bridges between all facets of the field. This summer's ICSOM Conference in Detroit will be dedicated to his memory. That the current ICSOM chair is not welcome to participate in an "open and frank" exchange of ideas at the same conference where a former ICSOM chair will be receiving the League's highest honor is as ironic as it is disappointing.

I'm not writing about this event to fan the flames of anger and distrust that are so prevalent in the field. No, in fact I am writing with the hope of extinguishing those flames, because that negativity is destroying our field.

In the December issue of *Senza Sordino*, I wrote: "We can always improve—and we must improve. We can express ourselves in a way that will inspire our audiences and the next generation. No one is inspired by ugly language." I went on to call for "a teachable moment" for our field among "musicians, orchestra managers, artist's managements, and journalists." And while my call has not yet been heeded, I am not ready to admit defeat.

I have often written and spoken about the destructiveness of our field's propensity to undermine its own potential for success. A new crop of pundits for our field has emerged, often with a negative message and (I fear) an ulterior motive. There is an undignified style of self-promotion that sloughs off the pages of newspapers and blogs when established people write indefensible claims such as "there are no sustainable orchestral models in this country that the field can point to and emulate." Not only is that untrue, it is destructive to those very places that are succeeding. When a person writes such damaging statements, and then uses a non-profit's website to heavily promote a personal blog, we have to ask ourselves what it is they are really hoping to achieve.

There is no lack of prosperity in America. What has changed is the nature of philanthropy. People like to give to organizations they believe in, and they simply won't believe in organizations that are poorly managed and are discussed in the press as "unsustainable." Why would anyone donate to a field where industry leadership describes orchestras as unsustainable? Really, it kind of boggles the mind. Even people who sell destructive products know how to portray them in a positive way, but the symphonic field doesn't know how to be its own advocate. At times it seems that our field only knows how to create radio programs that refer to orchestras as "Endangered Species."

There has never been a greater disparity of wealth in America than exists today. Often our managements claim that economic conditions inhibit fund raising. But according to the Associated Press, America's corporate CEOs earn more today than they did in 2007, before the onset of the recession. Just last year alone, CEOs averaged an increase in salary of 24%. In the late 1970s, the wealthiest 1% of Americans earned 9% of the income. Today, that same 1% earns 23% percent of the income and controls 40% of the nation's wealth.

ICSOM occasionally finds itself the target of those who preach the doctrine of failure for orchestras. One prolific blogger recently posted a suggestion that it was ICSOM that has led to the problems the field faces, though to be fair he was generous in pointing out that the managements agreed to our apparently unreasonable requests.

When managers and boards enter into the stereotypical debate that demonizes unions, they are overstepping the support of the American people. Even in Wisconsin, polls show that Governor Scott Walker would not be re-elected now, largely because he has overstepped his perceived mandate and brought negative publicity to the business community of his state.

As Alex Ross wrote in *The New Yorker* on May 9: "What's new about the current crisis is its sharply political edge, mirroring bigger battles that are taking place across the country. Managements and governing boards have often adopted an anti-union tone, charging that the costs of employing up to a hundred musicians year-round...have become insupportable....That classical music can still draw a crowd was made clear in March, when YouTube Symphony...lured in thirty-three million people online....Two orchestras that nearly went bankrupt in 2001—the St. Louis Symphony and the Toronto Symphony—are now thriving....The problem cases tend to show multiple symptoms of poor management: dubious real-estate moves, ham-fisted labor relations, klutzy P.R., and, above all, a lack of artistic focus....The classical business needs to start thinking of itself not as a luxury item but as an essential part of the average thinking person's life."

We have a document written by the president of the Chicago Symphony (CSO), which states: "[The CSO] now must solve a problem which has arisen from economic conditions beyond its control. A deficit has been incurred, and undoubtedly there will be annual deficits for some years to come. This affects the future of the orchestra....Our problem does not differ in kind from the financial problem that faces each of the...major orchestras in the United States."

Shocking news—except this was written in April 1940. It is this type of stereotypical and disproved rhetoric that must be rejected as we seek to find positive solutions for the arts management field.

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\$140 Million Cash and No Debts

by Blair Bollinger, The Philadelphia Orchestra

Despite two stark facts—\$140,000,000 in its endowment and no significant debts—the Philadelphia Orchestra Association (POA) filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on April 16, 2011. POA board chair Richard Worley claims that various “contractual entanglements threaten our existence.”

What the POA seeks was listed in a declaration in support of first-day motions by Worley: “The debtors seek in the Chapter 11 process to achieve the following outcomes: (1) relief from pension obligations, (2) relief from current contractual obligations to Peter Nero [and the Philly Pops] and others, (3) renegotiated contractual agreements with KCI [the concert hall], (4) a new collective bargaining agreement with Local 77 [the musicians], and (5) a court-approved plan with all these elements that will attract donor support.”

Without doubt, the Philadelphia Orchestra does have significant financial troubles. We have been running deficits for the past couple seasons. Ticket sales are down, donations of all kinds are down, and the stock market crash of 2008–2009 is still being felt in a reduced draw from the endowment. But those are all cash flow issues—problems that could be corrected through better marketing to sell more tickets and improved fund-raising. Bloomberg’s bankruptcy specialist compared the bankruptcy filing to “using a nuclear weapon to eradicate an infestation of fire ants.”

We first heard the “B word” in a newspaper interview with Worley and POA President Allison Vulgamore in January 2010. That caused an initial flurry of calls from POA business partners demanding immediate payment on all bills due. The musicians and community were both incredulous and horrified. POA leadership thankfully stopped talking about that for the next several months.

Bargaining for a new CBA began in October 2010. We were told that the Orchestra would run out of cash by November 30, 2010. That day came and went. Then we were told that unless we reached a new, concessionary CBA by the end of January, they would file for bankruptcy in February. That prediction was wrong, too. As the Orchestra’s assets far exceeded its liabilities we took this threat to be a hardball negotiating tactic. Negotiations and doomsday predictions continued, but management had “cried wolf” so many times that it was impossible to separate fact from fiction.

Upon the recommendation of our negotiating attorney, Susan Martin, and with the help of Local 77 President Joe Parente, we consulted and eventually engaged bankruptcy counsel Bruce Simon of Cohen, Weiss and Simon LLP in New York. With his help, we determined that the POA’s threats of bankruptcy, while seemingly idiotic, were becoming more real. We began to understand that their lawyers believed they could get out of contracts and pension obligations through Chapter 11 reorganization and any argument we made would fall on deaf ears.

Worley and Vulgamore asked to meet with the full orchestra on Sunday, April 10. Worley announced, “I expect a bankruptcy vote

by the full board at a meeting this Saturday [April 16], and I expect it to pass.” The musicians urged a public fund raising campaign, but the suggestion was not accepted.

It is now apparent that the court papers had already been prepared. Borrowing an idea from the Cleveland Orchestra, the musicians staged well-received leafleting exercises in the following days by leaving the stage just before concerts to give the audience information and ask them to e-mail Worley and Vulgamore to oppose the bankruptcy. And the full orchestra mounted a peaceful protest outside the law office where the infamous meeting was held. A brass group played outside on that chilly morning and a string quartet greeted arriving board members in the lobby. We learned that afternoon that the bankruptcy vote passed overwhelmingly despite passionate speeches and “No” votes from the five musicians on the board. Bankruptcy papers were filed electronically with the court that afternoon.

The case is working its way through the court system. Our attorneys estimate it will take 6 to 18 months to complete. POA has estimated their court costs at a staggering \$8 million to \$10 million—more than enough to bridge the gap between our contract proposals. Their lead attorney is running up a tab at \$750 per hour with several assistants at about \$400 per hour. It’s galling that the POA is willing to pay millions to attorneys but not willing to pay its obligations to the musicians. We’re also told that bankruptcies are essentially impossible to predict because our lives, as well as the Association’s, are now in the hands of a third party, the judge. We are proceeding one step at a time.

Call to Action

Louisville Symphony Orchestra musicians continue to face the uncertainties of bankruptcy. Their contract expired May 31, and their health insurance has been cut off.

Donations should be made payable to LOMA (Louisville Orchestra Musicians Association) and sent to Kim Tichenor; 146 North Hite Ave.; Louisville, KY 40206.

Syracuse Symphony Bankruptcy

by Stephen Laifer, Syracuse Symphony Orchestra

In April the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra moved with shocking swiftness from mounting a save-our-symphony-style fundraising campaign to the suspension of operations—and ultimately to a Chapter 7 bankruptcy—all in the midst of the orchestra's ostensibly celebratory 50th anniversary season. The bankruptcy filing was the culmination of months of panic-motivated decisions on the part of the SSO's board of directors and was the final act of years of bad management practices.

Serious issues surrounding the organization's stability began to surface in 2009. At that time the SSO's musicians proposed a two-year wage freeze as part of our renewal contract in order to help the SSO through a difficult economic period. The new three-year agreement was to return the orchestra to a 40-week season. The musicians believe that these concessions would secure the SSO management some breathing room to get their finances in order, saddled as they were with some \$5 million in accumulated debt and a critically underfunded pension.

Last summer management approached the musicians requesting further cuts, stating that things had deteriorated to the point that the orchestra would not be able to make it through its 50th anniversary season. In response to management's pleas that if the musicians would show good faith, then donors would open up their wallets, the musicians agreed in tense negotiations to a shortened summer season and \$140,000 in givebacks. A few short weeks later, management demanded further cuts totaling six weeks of salary, or \$580,000, to ensure that the orchestra would complete its season.

In the meantime the SSO launched a very visible campaign called "Keep the Music Playing," over a variety of media outlets involving requests for extraordinary funding from the public. Shortly thereafter, management again proposed further concessions totaling \$1.3 million, which would effectively take SSO musicians down to the

poverty level. The musicians refused these concessions, prompting the board to suspend operations on March 28. The remainder of the season was canceled. On April 5, the SSO board declared its intention to file for Chapter 7 bankruptcy—effectively ending a half-century of music in Upstate New York.

Immediately following an extremely traumatic and difficult period, and faced with huge uncertainty for the future, the SSO was fortunate to have the support of ICSOM and, especially, Bruce Ridge, who visited Syracuse April 10–12. Bruce made himself available for meetings with public officials and orchestra members over the three-day period, putting himself completely at the orchestra committee's disposal for the duration of his visit. First on his agenda was the attendance at performances for Syracuse Opera and a chamber orchestra concert at a local church, for which the SSO musicians had been hired as contract players. In between, Bruce met over dinner with the Local 78 governing board.

Day two began with meeting several members of the Syracuse Symphony Association, the volunteer wing of the orchestra. A lengthy strategizing meeting with the orchestra committee followed, held at the Local 78 offices. The day concluded with a pot-luck supper given by SSO musicians, at which Bruce expressed his hope and firm belief that we could, and would, be able to work together to help ourselves emerge from a horrific situation. The final day of Bruce's visit was the busiest, involving numerous meetings—with Rocco Mangano (SSO board chair), CEO Paul Brooks, Syracuse University School of Music officials, and Mayor Stephanie Miner—and interviews with local media representatives. Bruce also wrote a lengthy editorial for Syracuse's *Post-Standard* newspaper detailing why the city of Syracuse and its surrounding communities deserved to have a professional orchestra.

Throughout the weekend Bruce worked tirelessly as an advocate for professional music and professional musicians in Syracuse. His visit left SSO musicians with a renewed sense of purpose and self-worth.

[Editor's Note: On April 17 Bruce Ridge, on behalf of the ICSOM Governing Board, issued a Call to Action in support of Syracuse Symphony Orchestra musicians. Donations may be sent to Syracuse Symphony Musicians Relief Fund; c/o 3009 Burnet Ave.; Syracuse, NY 13206.]



In front of the Syracuse City Hall, after a meeting with Mayor Stephanie Miner. From the left: Victoria Krukowski (clarinet), Ernie Muzquiz (percussion), Bruce Ridge (ICSOM chair), Jon Garland (horn, committee chair), Bill Harris (trombone, retired).

Senza Sordino is the official voice of ICSOM and reflects ICSOM policy. However, there are many topics discussed in **Senza Sordino** on which ICSOM has no official policy; the opinions thus expressed in **Senza Sordino** are those of the author(s) and not necessarily of ICSOM, its officers, or members. Articles and letters expressing differing viewpoints are welcomed.

Orchestra Newslets

Virginia Symphony musicians performed in a benefit concert on April 14th to support relief efforts of the Red Cross in Japan. The chamber music event was titled “Benefit Concert for *Tomodachi*” (友達, or *tomodachi*, being Japanese for “friend” or “friends”). The VSO currently employs five natives of Japan: three performing musicians, a librarian, and a conducting associate. This collaboration included 25 musicians, friends from Old Dominion University, the Virginia Arts Festival, the staff and stage technicians of the VSO, and other community volunteers. Admission to the performance was by donation to the Red Cross (represented by their most grateful regional public relations director, Robert Shapiro) at the venue. The event was a moving and rewarding experience for everyone involved. Over \$2,100 was raised to help *tomodachi* in Japan.



The **North Carolina Symphony** partnered with the American Red Cross to raise funds for victims of the April 16 tornadoes that struck many locations throughout the state. During a statewide tour of free outdoor concerts, donations were accepted at each concert venue. The funds will be used to provide food, shelter, counseling, and other assistance for disaster victims.



The **Oregon Symphony** recently made its Carnegie Hall debut, participating as the oldest orchestra in the very first Spring for Music festival. The OSO’s challenging program, entitled “Music for a Time of War” and conducted by Music Director Carlos Kalmar, included Ives’ *Unanswered Question*, Adams’ *The Wound-Dresser* (with soloist Sanford Sylvan), Britten’s *Sinfonia da Requiem*, and Vaughan Williams’ Symphony No. 4. Delegate Alicia Paulsen says that, after extensive planning and fund raising and with the support of their board, patrons, and staff, the OSO was not only able to make the trip to New York city to perform in Carnegie Hall for the first time but also recorded their live Portland presentations of the same program.

According to the festival’s website, Spring for Music will feature North American symphony and chamber orchestras presented annually at Carnegie Hall at affordable prices. It is designed to allow participating orchestras to showcase their artistic philosophies through distinctive and adventurous programming. The foundation that presents the festival is headed by a board of directors that includes Daniel R. Lewis (the former Florida Philharmonic chair who oversaw its shutdown and founding chairman of the Musical Arts Association of Miami, which was formed to support the Cleveland Orchestra Miami Residency), Lowell Noteboom (former chair of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and current chair of the League of American Orchestras), Ara Guzelimian (provost and dean of The Juilliard School and former artistic advisor to Carnegie Hall), Catherine Gevers (formerly with Columbia Arts Management and Carnegie Hall, and currently on the board of Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Project), and Catherine French (former

president and CEO of the American Symphony Orchestra League, which is now known as the League of American Orchestras).

Joining the Oregon Symphony at the first Spring for Music festival were ICSOM orchestras the **Dallas Symphony** and the **Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra**. Also performing were orchestras of Albany, Montreal, and Toledo, as well as the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. ICSOM orchestras scheduled to participate in next year’s Spring for Music festival include the **Alabama Symphony**, the **Houston Symphony**, the **Milwaukee Symphony**, the **Nashville Symphony**, and the **New Jersey Symphony**. ICSOM orchestras scheduled to participate in the 2013 Spring for Music festival include the **Baltimore Symphony**, the **Buffalo Philharmonic**, the **Oregon Symphony**, the **Cincinnati Symphony**, and the **National Symphony**.



On the international front, the two orchestras of the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, the Orquesta Estable and the Buenos Aires Philharmonic, have been seeking raises since last year. After a strike ensued, a \$13 million lawsuit was filed against eight union representatives (four orchestra musicians, three choir members, and the theater’s photographer) and administrative procedures for their dismissal were initiated. Following large increases in ticket prices at the theater, the strike started last year after a government representative said that there were no plans for a raise in the 2011 budget. The director started the new season without orchestra by staging Ligeti’s *Le Grand Macabre* with two pianos and percussion. When Pacido Domingo visited, the orchestra refused to play at the Teatro Colón but did play in the streets as a good will gesture to Domingo and the community. When Domingo left, 41 musicians on yearly contracts were fired on the pretense that they were not permanent staff, being told that since the permanent staff was on strike, they were not needed. The four key points for negotiation are a 40% raise, the withdrawal of the lawsuit, no layoffs, and no other punishments (some orchestra members’ pay showed deductions for the days on strike).



Ivan Tasovac, managing director of the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra (in Serbia) gave a keynote address last March at the 2nd FIM International Orchestra Conference in Amsterdam that included this powerful image. The slogan in the advertisement for the orchestra’s 2009–2010 concert season marks the Belgrade Philharmonic’s political independence.

Chairperson's Report

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Just as I have called upon our members to engage in a dialogue of the highest tone, I hope that someone who is actually invited to speak at the League conference will have the courage to do the same for their membership. I challenge them to do so. No, I implore them.

I want to assure the League that while the lack of an invitation to an event that will honor Fred Zenone is an insult to ICSOM, I do not take it as a personal insult. I remain willing to meet with all leaders of our field, to build friendships and engage in serious debate. In fact, two weeks after our offer was declined, the president of the League did write with an invitation for me to meet with the League board at some point in the next year. We will of course accept that invitation with the hope that it will lead to a positive, open, and frank conversation. But it does not alleviate the lost opportunity of having a public conversation at this critical moment. There are real issues before us. We have problems with marketing, media, leadership, board cultivation, and advocacy. We have created a climate where bankruptcy appears to be thought of as a negotiation tactic—when, in fact, bankruptcy is a terrible fund raising tool and a rather undignified way to attempt to escape one's obligations.

For nearly fifty years, ICSOM has been a leader in this field. Now we must lead again. I urge our members not to cast aspersions toward the League over this event, and I call on the League to change as well. We must not perpetuate this destructive dialogue further.

So if there is a discussion to be had, let's have it. Name the time and place and I'll be there, assuming I am not playing a sold-out concert. If we meet this challenge and build an actual dialogue where we aren't staked out in foxholes, we have a brilliant future to look to, where orchestras thrive and serve the entire community, where young children build foundations for their education through arts activities, where musicians need not lose their jobs, where their salaries will allow them to support their families, and where spouses of musicians facing illness need not lose their health insurance. It is the American dream, and it is not lost to us yet. But should we fail in this effort, then all we have to look forward to is more writers promoting their own names with statements like "American orchestras will keep failing...Darwinism is at work."

The way things are is not the way things have to be.

On a recent evening, I looked to the upper balcony during my orchestra's performance of Mahler's 9th to see it full of young people clearly under the age of 15. Apparently none of them had been told that their dreams are unsustainable.

Detroit Returns

(continued from page 1)

is frustrating to realize that without those unreasonable demands, the entire strike and its fallout could probably have been avoided. Essentially, the bargaining team spent the better part of a year fighting off changes that should never have been put on the table. The DSO musicians were glad to ratify the agreement and to bring their utmost professionalism back to the stage. The future will bring continued challenges. One major goal will be to bring about greater board understanding of how to preserve and enhance a great symphony orchestra.

The musicians of the DSO owe a great debt of thanks to their fellow ICSOM members and leaders, as well as the national AFM officers who provided support at key moments. We are honored to be the host orchestra of the 2011 ICSOM Conference this August and look forward to meeting many friends and colleagues.

2011 ICSOM Conference

August 17–20, 2011

**Hyatt Regency Dearborn
600 Town Center Drive
Dearborn, Michigan 48126**

Scheduled speakers include:
Congressman John Conyers Jr. (D-MI)
George Cohen, Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service
Bruce Simon, attorney
Aaron Dworkin, The Sphinx Organization

Orchestra presentations and panels include:

Detroit Symphony
Honolulu Symphony
Louisville Orchestra
New York City Opera
Philadelphia Orchestra
Syracuse Symphony

Delegates should already have received Conference packets

All attendees must register with Secretary Laura Ross by July 15

AFM Appoints Jay Blumenthal as SSD Director

AFM President Ray Hair has announced the appointment of Jay Blumenthal as director of Symphonic Services Division and as the Federation's assistant treasurer. "He is well known for promoting open, honest discussion on difficult issues, in difficult times, in a manner that encourages respect and problem-solving," said Hair about Blumenthal.

Jay Blumenthal performed as a professional musician for 40 years. He has served on the orchestra committee of the New York City Ballet Orchestra and as chair of the New York Pops Orchestra Committee. His involvement with ICSOM began as a delegate for the New York City Ballet Orchestra, and he was later elected to serve as a member-at-large of the ICSOM Governing Board, a position he held until 2004. Blumenthal has been a member of the Local 802 Executive Board since 1998. For the past eight years he has served as a full-time officer at Local 802—as financial vice president and as supervisor of the Concert Department responsible for symphony, opera, and ballet contracts. Blumenthal holds a Ph.D. in Music Education from New York University and resides in Manhattan with his wife and two daughters.

"We all know there are many challenges facing the symphonic field today, but I truly believe they are not insurmountable," says Blumenthal. "Building relationships, engaging in honest good faith discussions, and thinking creatively accomplish much more than finger pointing, hand wringing, and unilateral actions. Symphonic music is the ultimate expression of humanity. We must navigate through the difficult issues to preserve the music we hold so dear, while maintaining the standard of living of the musicians who perform it."

The current SSD director, Christopher Durham, will continue to serve the AFM as chief field negotiator, an area where he has excelled for many years. "The Governing Board of ICSOM wishes to thank Chris Durham for his service as director of the Symphonic Services Division," said ICSOM Chairperson Bruce Ridge. "Chris has earned the appreciation and admiration of every musician in the AFM. We wish him well in his role as an extraordinary negotiator and advocate for musicians. We also welcome Jay Blumenthal to his new position with the SSD, and we are very excited to work with Jay, as we all continue to work together to advocate for musicians and the arts everywhere."

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